

Women have made tremendous economic, political, and social advances during the 20th century, but are far from enjoying gender equality. Women continue to face many obstacles in our society, and I am committed to working towards policy changes that support and encourage gender equality. Issues that affect women's daily lives – such as employment, earnings, poverty, work and family policies, health, and violence – are of critical importance to me. More information about the status of women in the United States is available [here](#).

### **Poverty, Employment, and Earnings**

Despite tremendous strides, American women continue to earn less, are less likely to own a business, and are more likely to live in poverty than American men. A 2008 report by the [Institute for Women's Policy Research](#)

found that women are paid 68 cents for every dollar a white man makes. On January 9<sup>th</sup>, 2009 as one of the very first legislative actions of the 111<sup>th</sup> Congress, the House of Representatives passed the

[Paycheck Fairness Act](#)

, H.R. 12, and the Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act of 2009, H.R. 11, simultaneously. The Paycheck Fairness Act will revise enforcement prohibitions against sex discrimination in wage payments and the Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act will ensure the continued protection the right of workers to pursue pay discrimination claims against employers who seek to illegally deny them fair pay. The bill is a common sense response to the Supreme Court's narrow ruling in the Ledbetter vs. Goodyear which ignored the realities of the workplace. It recognizes that employees generally do not know enough about what their co-workers earn, or how pay decisions are made, to file a complaint precisely when discrimination first occurs.

Larger structural issues such as sex discrimination and job segregation play an important role in the perpetuation of women's lower earnings. Race, ethnicity, and place also continue to shape women's economic opportunities. For example, California – a state with relatively large proportions of women of color – shows striking wage disparities by race and ethnicity. The report is available [here](#). Congressman Honda will continue to advocate for equality and justice for all.

### **Work and Family**

Workplace policies and practices that reflect the changing nature of the workforce have the potential to play an important role for all workers. Women are active participants in the labor market, and often are fulfilling multiple roles – as workers, mothers, and caregivers for aging parents.

Data from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics show that 59 million workers do not have paid sick leave and nearly 86 million workers do not have paid sick leave to care for sick children. Paid sick leave allows workers to take the time needed to care for themselves and for their family members without decreasing their family's income or risk losing their jobs. Therefore, I am a proud co-sponsor of numerous family and medical leave protection and expansion bills which would provide family and medical need assistance, child care assistance, in-school and after school assistance, family care assistance, and support for the establishment of family-friendly workplaces for working families.

## Violence against Women

Stopping violence against women is an issue of vital concern for all of us. For the past decade, the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) has served as a landmark piece of legislation that has provided aid to women, men, and children experiencing violence. VAWA programs and services have changed and improved our nation's response to violence at every level. Since 1994, VAWA funding has provided rape crisis centers, domestic violence shelters, and law enforcement agencies with the expertise and services they need to do the work of prevention and protection of those affected by violence. The [Violence Against Women Act of 2005](#) includes all of the original provisions of VAWA and adds new and expanded programs and provisions, including additional provisions for immigrant women. Click

[here](#)

for my statement on Domestic Violence Awareness Month.

## Reproductive Rights

I am committed to ensuring access to comprehensive sex education, birth control, and safe and legal abortion. I believe that women, families, and the country would be better off if we could reduce the number of unintended pregnancies and the need for abortion. This is why I am a proud cosponsor of the [Prevention First Act](#), which would provide comprehensive family planning services, expand teenage pregnancy prevention services, and provide equity in insurance coverage of prescription contraception drugs, devices, and outpatient services. I am also a co-sponsor of the Responsible Education About Life Act which would provide federal money to support responsible sex education in schools. This education would include science-based, medically accurate, and age appropriate public health information about both abstinence and contraception.

In July of 2008, the Department of Health and Human Services proposed new rules that would have blurred the line between birth control and abortion. The proposed rules also expanded the so-called "conscience" exemption to allow health care professionals to refuse to provide

contraception to women who ask for it. In the face of growing public and Congressional outrage, the regulations were issued by the Bush administration. Fortunately, President Obama took swift action in the early days of his Presidency to issue new rules, protecting the original intent of the conscience clause while preserving womens' access to contraception and other family planning services.